

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS [MAJOR GEN. (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI]: (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) World Bank has provided assistance for projects for improvement/maintenance of State Highways in two States viz. Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat for US\$ 350 million and US\$ 381 million respectively. There is no World Bank assistance for such projects to any other State Government.

(d) As the above two State Highway Projects are under implementation, it is too early to indicate the extent of improvements in highway and transport productivity.

Decline in number of persons seeking H1-B Visa

†*586. SHRI KAPIL SIBAL:

SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN':

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been continuous decline in the number of persons seeking H1-B visa clearance from USA during the last few years;

(b) if so, the number of such persons during the years 1998, 1999 and 2000; and

(c) whether the number of such persons is likely to decline further during the year 2001 and if so, the estimated number thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) No, Sir:

(b) For fiscal year 1998 (October 1997 to September 1998), the limit of H1-B visas was 65,000, which was exhausted by May 1998.

For fiscal year 1999 (October 1998 to September 1999) the limit was increased to 115,000 visas, which was used up by June 1999.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

For fiscal year 2000 (October 1999 to September 2000), the limit was 115,000 visas, which was reached by 21st March 2000.

(c) Recent slowdown in the U.S. economy, and the announced retrenchments in some of the major U.S. IT companies has led to a decline in demand for professionals with H1-B visa. However, 72,000 H1-B visas had been granted till March 31, 2001, whilst 60,000 applications are currently under consideration. It might be added that between 40-50% of persons receiving H1-B visas are estimated to be Indian nationals.

Scientists Leaving DRDO

†*587. SHRI JHUMUK LAL BHENDIA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether ten per cent of the scientists working in the Defence Research and Development Organisation are leaving their jobs in order to join private companies abroad;

(b) the reasons therefor, the efforts made so far to persuade them not to leave their jobs and its impact on the defence projects;

(c) the number of officers and employees working at present in the Organisation and the number of the scientists among them;

(d) whether the yearly target for recruitment of scientists is being fulfilled; and

(e) if so, the details of the vacancies occurred and the recruitments made during the last two years?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Scientists/engineers, when they leave do so as to private sector companies in India and abroad offer better emoluments. A new incentive scheme is being worked out to make DRDO job more attractive. So far, the impact on the defence R&D projects is minimal.

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